

Grooming A Welsh Springer Spaniel For Pet Or Show

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If you are fortunate enough to get your Welshie as a puppy you can gently expose the new puppy to the many facets of grooming. By spending 5 minutes a day over several weeks you can have your puppy begging to be groomed. We all know how much Welshies love to eat - just refer to the last issue of the STARTER BARKS. With the use of some tasty morsels and very encouraging words, the puppy can learn to love being groomed.

This article will explain how to get a puppy accustomed to being groomed, how to groom a pet Welshie, how to handle that fluffy neutered coat and some tips on grooming the show dog from my perspective. These are only my observations of grooming and there are many other innovative ways to groom and present a dog for pet or show. Just as there are different ways to handle dogs in the show ring to look their best, there are different opinions on how to groom a Welshie. I am continually learning and I invite you to share your opinions on grooming. The best presentation of the dog, according to the breed standard, should be foremost in our discussion and not what the fad of the year is. The goal in grooming for all my dogs is for health and cleanliness.

Grooming the Puppy

Puppies may balk at the idea of being groomed, but if you do a little each day and reward the puppy for its efforts of staying on the grooming table for five minutes, you will be pleased with the results for years to come. Have a supply of puppy treats, which can be part of the puppy's regular meal or some very special, nutritional treats.

WEEK ONE

Handle all parts of the puppy's body.

Handle the puppy's paws and wiggle the nails and press on the pads. Give a treat and praise after handling each paw.

Touch each ear and look inside. Give a treat.

Touch the muzzle and lift one lip to look at the teeth. Praise and treat.

Stroke the muzzle and the skull and look at the eyes. Praise and treat.

Touch the tail and tickle the underside checking the anal area for cleanliness.

Always keep the sessions positive and no longer than five minutes for the first week.

WEEK TWO

Continue with week one procedures.

Insert your fingers in the corner of the puppy's mouth and rub a few teeth. Praise and treat.

Let the puppy sniff several grooming tools (comb, brush, toenail clippers). Praise and treat.

WEEK THREE

Continue with weeks one and two procedures.

Open the puppy's mouth and examine the teeth. Close the mouth and check the bite. Praise and treat.

Comb or brush the puppy's coat for a few seconds. Praise and treat.

Hold the puppy's foot and trim a few nails. Praise and treat. Next day trim nails on a different foot. In four days you will have the toenails trimmed.

Praise and treat.

The next few weeks are crucial in the development of the puppy and their trust and relationship to you. It is important for the socialization to continue between you and the puppy in a one-on-one basis for this special bonding time. Treats are dispensed very liberally in the beginning when you are training the puppy to accept and enjoy the process of grooming. With positive reinforcement, puppies will associate the grooming process with rewards and once learned, grooming can be enjoyed with random treats.

The puppy should always be up in a comfortable position for you to groom. Grooming tables with an arm can be quite expensive. If you do not have a grooming table, you can get a non-skid bath mat and place it on a counter top, or a card table, or a picnic table, or on top of the washer or dryer. When the puppy is up on a higher place, you have more control and the puppy is less likely to run away. You should have control of the head either with a noose or collar for manageability.

Welsh Springer Spaniels, by nature, are very clean dogs. The coat texture is one that readily sheds dirt and is easily maintained. General maintenance grooming can be achieved with a greyhound comb, slicker brush, thinning scissors, small scissors for feet and ears, stripping blade and toenail trimmers or grinder for nails. Grooming for the show ring requires a few more tools and a little more elbow grease. I will be suggesting several tools which I have found comfortable to use. Many grooming tools serve the same purpose; it is desirable for you to try several different types and find which ones feel comfortable in your hand to use. Welsh Springer groomers in the United States are more prone to using clippers for trim work, whereas, in other countries, most grooming is done by hand using scissors and stripping (with blades or thumb and finger).



Some Tools of Grooming

Pre Grooming

Assemble all of your grooming tools which you will be using within easy reach of your grooming area. Before bathing, spray a little water or conditioner on the dog's coat to begin combing. Remove all mats and any debris (leaves, pine needles, etc.). For stubborn mats, I like to use Suave For Kids detangling spray. It makes the hair very slippery and the mat can be worked loose with your fingers and a comb. If you must cut a mat, cut with the length of the hair and not across. To proceed with the grooming the dog must be clean to decrease the wear and tear on your scissors and clippers. Bathe the dog using a good cleansing shampoo. If your dog has skin allergies, there are shampoos available that are soapfree and hypoallergenic. Use a little conditioner, either cream or lanolin. This will help revitalize the natural oils of the dog's coat and make the hair more manageable with which to work.

PET TRIM - HEAD, NECK, AND EARS

Start with the head and the ears. Remove all the hair from the ear entrance with thinning scissors or #10 clipper blade. Good air circulation under the ear flap helps decrease the incidence of bacterial or yeast infections of the ear. Ear cleaners can be used regularly with cotton swabs to cleanse the dog's ears.

Trim the top third of the ear, inside and outside with thinning scissors or #10 clipper blade. This will help keep mats from forming behind the ears. The hair on the bottom two thirds of the ears can be plucked, stripped, or scissored with thinning shears. It is your personal preference as to how long you want the ear hair. For hand stripping, you can use rubber finger tips (found in office supply stores) or sprinkle some chalky ear powder on the hair which enables you to get a good grip on the hair.



The Ear before Trimming



Trimming Inside the Ear To Improve Air Circulation.



A Nicely Trimmed Ear.

Some people like stripping blades while others like to use a stripping stone. Use what feels comfortable to you.

If the dog develops an ear infection, there will be a very profuse amount of unpleasantly smelling dark wax. The dog will often shake its head or scratch at the ear.

It is time to get a veterinarian appointment and get medication for this infection.

Thinning scissors or clippers may be used under the dogs chin and neck to trim hair from the neck to just above the sternum. Thinning scissors can be used to blend the neck hair into the shoulders.

PET TRIM - FEET

If you have worked with your dog from puppyhood, you may have trained the dog to lie on its side to have feet done. Otherwise the dog will need to be standing on a grooming table and feel comfortable with having the feet being held. Thinning scissors are used to trim the hair on top of the toes. Care should be taken to check for any mats which may be between the toes. Small scissors or clippers may be used to remove hair from the bottom of the foot between the pads. Nails should be cut with a nail trimmer of your choice or ground using a Dremel tool. Have some styptic powder on hand during nail trimming in case you cut into the quick. Trim nails regularly to keep the quick from getting too long. Dogs who run every day on rough surfaces may not need nails trimmed very often as opposed to dogs who run on carpet and very grassy surfaces.

PET TRIM - TAIL

The hair under the tail should be trimmed with thinning scissors. Any long hair on either side of the anus can be shortened for cleanliness. Clean the anal glands or ask your groomer or vet to do it.

PET TRIM - BODY COAT

We all love the natural red and white, dirt shedding body coat of our Welshies. The body coat is relatively easy to care for with some stripping using a blade, stone, or fingers. There may come a time with a neutered pet Welshie in which the use of clippers on the body is needed for a more manageable coat and for cleanliness. A #7 or #5 blade gives a nice length to the haircoat and improves the appearance of a very fluffy or curly dog. The unruly neutered coat can be managed and kept clean with regular trimming. For older dogs this can be a quick way to groom the dog without having it spend an hour or more on the grooming table.



A Fuzzy Foot Ready for A Trim



Trimming the Underside Of The Foot.



Finished

Show Grooming

Familiarize yourself with the breed standard. Know your dog's strengths and weaknesses. When you groom, accentuate the positive and show off your dog's good features. Remember that the coat should not be so excessive as to hinder his work as a flushing spaniel. Part of grooming should also include conditioning with weight being in proportion to height and preserving the rectangular shape of the dog. The Welsh Springer Spaniel should not be displayed with any excessiveness. It is the one flushing spaniel with no exaggeration or extreme in styled body type or customized grooming fads.

GROOMING BETWEEN SHOWS

Between shows the dog's coat should have a conditioner applied to help prevent mats, split ends and to keep the feathering oiled. Two to three weeks before the show, the dog should be combed out, remembering to dampen the coat before combing. Gently remove all mats using the Suave detangling spray. Using a stripping blade or fine toothed comb, work on the body coat, starting at the neck and working toward the rear of the dog. This will get some of the soft undercoat removed to make the topcoat lie smoother to the body. Work in the direction of the way the hair grows. Work all the way down each front leg and the side of the rear legs removing the fuzzy hair at the top of the front leg and the side of the hock. Some of this fuzzy hair is easily removed with thumb and finger stripping and a little chalky ear powder. I like to work on the dead hair of the body coat before bathing because you can get a better grip on dirty hair. More dead hair will come out after bathing, as well, due to the massaging of the body hair during the bath.

Bathe the dog with a good cleaning shampoo. If you have stubborn stains or grease you can use some diluted detergent (Dawn or Palmolive) for ease in getting out the stains. Detergent should not be used on a regular basis because it is very harsh to the hair. Products that are made especially for dogs should be used as much as possible. Apply a light conditioner to keep the dog's coat moisturized and texturized. The body coat should be brushed in the direction it grows and can be toweled to make the hair lie flat. Feathering can be dried with a hair dryer on cool setting or can dry naturally.

SHOW TRIM

Now that the dog is dematted, has some dead hair removed, and is bathed, you are ready to start the initial trim for the show. Set your dog up in front of a mirror and see what the judge is going to see. Look at the outline you want to present to the judge and determine how best to groom your dog for that polished presentation to the judge. I like to begin my initial show trim of the dog at least two weeks before the show because the hair grows back just slightly enough to give a more natural appearance.

HEAD, EARS, & NECK

Start with the head, ears and neck. It is your preference to use clippers or thinning scissors to remove the hair from the top third of the inside and outside of the ears.

My personal preference is two weeks before the show to clip with a #10 or #15 against the grain of the hair on the top third of the and blend the bottom two thirds of the ear. All the hair is removed from the ear canal opening to allow for air flow and decrease the chances of ear infection. The breed standard says "Gradually narrowing towards the tip, they are shaped somewhat like a vine

leaf and are lightly feathered.” Thinning scissors or stripping blade or stone is used to blend the top of the ear with the skull.

A stripping blade or stone can be used to take away the fuzzy hair on top of the skull and shape any long hair on the head. Overall balance is most important with a slightly domed skull and a clearly defined stop. Blend the back of the skull into the neck. White hair tends to grow more profusely than red hair on the Welshies. If your dog has a big white collar, you will have more stripping and thinning to do. Sometimes a straight razor will help with the blending of the neck into the shoulders.

Trim the neck starting about an inch above the sternum, and clean the hair from seam to seam. Again, my personal preference is to use the clippers against the grain of the hair and trim all the way to the chin on the white hair. Using thinning scissors, blend the hair of the seam (cowlick where the neck hair changes growing direction) on the neck. Some people like to use a straight razor or stripping stone or blade to do this blending. Try several different tools till you find what is comfortable for you to give the neck a natural appearance. Viewing the neck from the front, there should be the slight tendency for an “A” shaped bib. The “A” is formed above the top of the sternum and drawing an imaginary line out to the left and right points of shoulder and down the front legs. The top of the “A” will be wider or narrower, depending on what appearance you want to achieve with the dog’s front. If your dog has good, straight front legs, any wisps of hair on the top of the legs can be thinned or stripped to enhance the front movement coming into the judge. As viewed from the front and side the chest feathering should not go below the dog’s knee (carpal joint). Before trimming the bib, set up your dog in front of the mirror, again, to see what shape you want to achieve.



Before Trimming the Front



Trimming Front Using the Clippers



Trimming Front Using the Thinning Shears



The Finished Front

BODY

The body coat should be brushed to bring out the natural oils and shine. Never brush or comb a dry coat. Always spray lightly with water or a diluted conditioner. Massage the coat with your fingers to loosen any dead hair, then, brush again. Work from the neck, down the shoulders, across the back and all the way down the front and rear legs. The top coat of the dog will be straighter and lie flatter if dead hair and fluffy undercoat is removed weekly.

This can be done with fingertip massages or stripping tools. The breed standard states: "The back of the forelegs, the hind legs above the hocks, chest and underside of the body are moderately feathered. The ears and tail are lightly feathered. Coat so excessive as to be a hindrance in the field is to be discouraged. Obvious barbering is to be avoided as well."



Position of Scissors To Remove a Mat



Hind Leg before Trimming.



Stripping the Stifle



Hind Leg after Trim

REAR & TAIL

Excess hair under the tail should be removed with thinning scissors. Any stray hairs on either side of the anus should be blended. If your dog has a natural tail, the hair can be shaped with scissors. For a neat end of the tail, take the excess hair beyond the tailbone, twist it several times and cut it between the end of the tailbone and your fingers, being careful to only cut hair. The rest of the hair can be shaped in a nice arc.

Feathering on the rear legs should not go too much below the hocks. The body feathering can be tapered slightly from behind the front legs to blend with the hair on the inside of the rear legs. Any fuzzy hair on the outside of the rear leg near the stifle and hock should be stripped away.

FEET

Trim the feet to give a round, tight appearance. The tops of the feet can be shaped with the thinning scissors, making sure to get any mats between the toes. The bottoms of the feet should

be cleared of all excess hair between the pads and shaped around the toes. This can be achieved with small scissors or clippers.

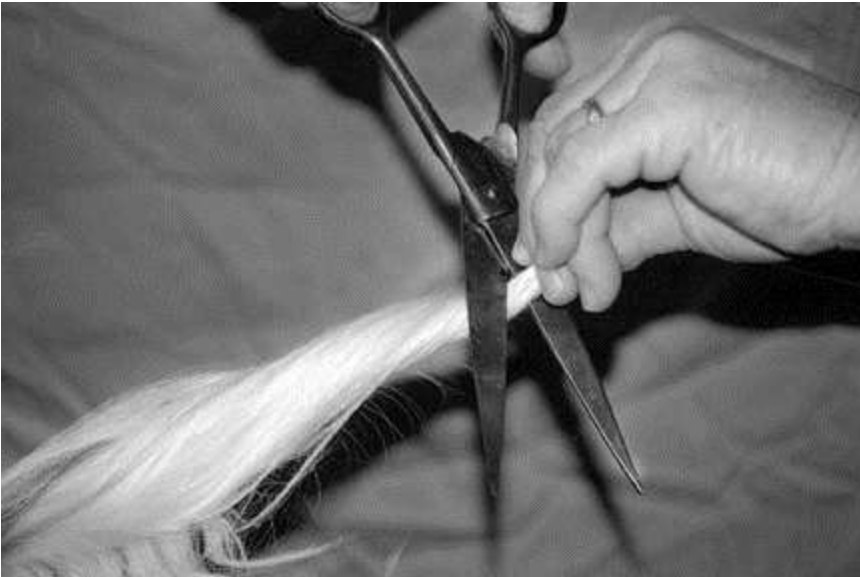
Nails should be trimmed regularly to keep the quick from getting too long. Nail trimmers of your choice or a Dremel tool can be used. Trim toenails regularly, but not the week of the show in case you get one too short, it will give the nail a chance to heal. You do not want a limping dog in the ring.



Trimming the Docked Tail



Shaped Docked Tail



Trimming the Natural Tail



Shaped Natural Tail

Grooming Products

I do not endorse any grooming products, but I will share with you some that I have used over the years with good results. Each year I try to attend the National Grooming Expo held in Hershey, PA, in September. On display at the Expo are mobile grooming vans, grooming tools and products, doggy bathing and grooming demonstrations and vendors for all types of grooming needs. This is where I find new products and tools and talk to the dealers.

The companies which have good general cleaning shampoos that I have used are Bio-Groom, #1 All Systems, Groomers Edge, Top Performance, Oster, and Miracle Coat. Wahl has a line of organic shampoos and conditioners. As for medicated shampoos, Dermapet and Hylyt by DVM have medicated, hypoallergenic and soap free products for dogs with allergies and very dry skin. With the advancement in Flea and Tick preventatives, I no longer use dips, sprays or shampoos for ridding the dog of these pests.

Special whitening shampoos that I have used include E-Z Groom Crystal White, Ped-A-Gree Blue, Winners Circle Ultra White, #1 All Systems Pure White Lightening.

No-Rinse shampoo is made by several different companies. This is good for a quick clean-up at a show and while traveling when a full bath is not possible.

Some of the conditioners I use for show grooming and final touches are: Ped-A-Gree Pooshe, Chris Christensen Ice on Ice (diluted with distilled water) and Crown Royal Magic Touch #2. The Stuff is very oily and is a good conditioner to use between shows on the feathering to prevent mats and repel dirt.

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Sandy Roth has been grooming pet and show dogs since 1972. She is co-author with Eve Adamson of a book titled "The Simple Guide To Grooming Your Dog". Sandy has been showing dogs since 1970 and has had Welsh Springer Spaniels since 1984.